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National Republican Club,
Inc.

Report of the Committee
on National Affairs...

[New York]

[1922]

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Report of the Committee on National Affairs on Soldiers' Bonus

COMMITTEE

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SAMUEL McCUNE LINDSAY
STUART McNAMARA
NEWBOLD MORRIS
J. VAN VECHTEN OLCOTT
HENRY W. TAFT

PETER ZUCKER

The within Report was presented to a Regular Meeting of National Republican Club, Inc., held February 21, 1922, and duly adopted.

OSCAR W. EHRHORN,
Recording Secretary.

12-3
JAN 1923

COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL AFFAIRS OF THE
NATIONAL REPUBLICAN CLUB

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON SOLDIERS' BONUS

The Committee on National Affairs submit the following report and recommendations:

At the stated monthly meeting of the Club held on January 17, 1922, the following resolution introduced by Colonel Newbold Morris and seconded by Captain Henry W. Goddard, was referred to the Committee on National Affairs:

Resolved, That the National Republican Club be opposed to the grant of a federal bonus to any former soldier who can not show a wound.

The Committee on National Affairs, having given full consideration to this resolution at a meeting held on January 27, report it back with the recommendation that it be adopted in the following form:

Resolved, That the National Republican Club be opposed to the grant of a federal bonus to any former soldier who cannot show a wound or who was not disabled in the service.

The Committee are of opinion that the far-reaching principles and grave economic issues involved in the proposal for a federal soldiers' bonus, are not clearly understood. This proposal has nothing to do with the care of the wounded, the disabled, or the dependent. It is merely a proposal to grant, out of the Treasury of the United States, in one form or another, what is called adjusted compensation. This means increased pay to all who served in the military or naval forces of the United States between April 5, 1917, and November 12, 1918, except those who were dishonorably discharged, or were discharged on account of alienage, or were conscientious objectors, and this notwithstanding the fact that the pay of those in the

military and naval forces of the United States was doubled at the outbreak of the War and that extra allowances for foreign service were also made.

The Secretary of the Treasury, in a letter addressed to the Chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means of the House of Representatives under date of January 24, 1922, makes it plain that the total cost of the proposed bonus would be about \$3,330,000,000, of which at least \$850,000,000 would fall in the first two years of its operation. The Secretary adds that the maximum cost might reach \$5,250,000,000. These huge estimates take no account of expense of administration or the possible cost of vocational training aid, farm or home aid, or of federal land aid to veterans who might elect such benefits. Moreover, the expenditures involved would be in addition to the sums already appropriated, chiefly for relief to disabled veterans, which now amount to \$450,000,000 annually and constitute the largest single item in the federal budget with the exception of the interest on the public debt.

The federal government maintains numerous and admirably equipped hospitals for the care of sick and disabled veterans. The federal government is now spending large sums at rates ranging from \$25 to \$135 a month, for compensation to soldiers who are in those hospitals. In every Northern state except Maine and Utah, comfortable Soldiers' Homes have been established, toward the maintenance of which the United States Government contributes \$120 per year per inmate. The national government itself maintains ten splendidly equipped Soldiers' Homes, scattered over the country from Maine to California and from Wisconsin to Tennessee, where every honorably discharged soldier, be he regular, volunteer, or drafted man, who has served in any war in which the United States has taken part, is eligible for membership when unable by reason of accident, illness, or old age to maintain himself. At each of these national Soldiers' Homes there is provision for music, theater, library, club rooms, amusement halls, and billiard tables, as well as for hospital care and religious instruction. A member of one of these Soldiers' Homes finds all his needs met by the government. He is clothed. He is given wholesome food. He is housed in clean, well ventilated barracks equipped with every

modern convenience. At his death he is given a military funeral and a volley is fired over his grave. The United States Government erects a marble headstone, on which is inscribed his name, his regiment, and his state.

There is, therefore, involved in the proposed soldiers' bonus no question of the nation fulfilling its obligations to its disabled veterans. That obligation is, as the Secretary of the Treasury pointed out, continuing and paramount, and the expenditures therefor will be very heavy for years to come. Moreover, a sum estimated at more than \$350,000,000 has already been provided in bonus and other legislation for the benefit of ex-service men by the several states.

A federal soldiers' bonus, on the other hand, is an attempt to appraise patriotic service in terms of dollars and cents, with the certain result of demoralizing the public spirit of the nation by distributing hundreds of millions, even thousands of millions of dollars, as a gratuity. If the money were at hand with which to make this distribution, the proposal would be highly objectionable on grounds of public policy. It would entirely overlook the fact that it is the primary duty of the citizen, particularly in a self-governing republic, to defend the State without expectation of compensation of any kind, and that in organized society there are duties owed by the citizen to the state as well as benefits which flow from the state to the citizen. When, however, the money for such purpose must be raised by imposing new taxes at a time when the business, the labor and the agriculture of the country are staggering under their tax burdens, it is unthinkable that steps should be taken that might well result in increase of unemployment, in still greater depression of agriculture, and in indefinitely postponing the revival of business, while the great army of tax-payers are compelled to provide the huge sums that would be needed for this unwise purpose. As party politics, such action spells suicide; as public policy, it is madness.

This same question has been raised once before in recent American history, although in far smaller proportions. In February, 1875, the Congress passed a bill "to equalize the bounties of soldiers who served in the late war for the Union," and

President Grant, a Republican and a former Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the United States, vetoed the bill in a message bearing date March 3, 1875, in words which rang throughout the country. President Grant objected to this bill because it appropriated from the Treasury a large sum of money at a time when the revenue was insufficient for current wants; because the issue of bonds authorized by the bill would seriously embarrass the refunding operations then progressing; and because in his judgment it would result more in a measure for the relief of claim agents and middle men who would intervene to collect or discount the bounties granted by it. "The passage of this bill at this time," wrote President Grant, "is inconsistent with the measure of economy now demanded by the necessities of the country." These patriotic words are applicable with tenfold force today.

The Committee believe that the National Republican Club should take the strongest possible ground on this subject and should strike a note of leadership that will be heard throughout the United States. The Committee believe that the Club should make an appeal to Republican senators and members of Congress not to be misled by the clamor of individuals and organizations which may have a personal interest in the proposed action, but to view this question in the light of the financial and economic conditions that have been pointed out by the Secretary of the Treasury and to act solely from the view point of the highest public interest. Moreover, Republican senators and members of Congress should be urged to put before the enrolled voters of the country a clear and simple statement of what this adjusted compensation or soldiers' bonus would mean to our public finances and to the burdens which the tax-payer must bear. In the light of this information they should then ascertain exactly how great is the demand for this action on the part of Republican voters, and how far it comes from those not in sympathy with the Republican Party, who would be only too glad to have that Party assume responsibility for increased taxation and prolonged business depression.

In this connection the Committee believe that it is opportune to press for an inquiry as to the detailed expenditure of the sums now appropriated by the Congress for the relief of dis-

abled veterans. If there is faulty administration, it should be discovered and stopped. If there is waste, it should be discovered and stopped. If there is lack of sympathy and an excess of red tape, that should be discovered and stopped. The disabled veteran is entitled to the fullest benefit from the expenditure of every dollar that is appropriated on his behalf. If the amounts already appropriated for the purpose of doing all that can be done for the disabled veteran, are not sufficient, then that fact should be made plain, for the people will certainly approve the appropriation of whatever sums may be shown to be needed for this purpose.

The Committee therefore recommend the adoption of the following resolution:

Resolved, That the National Republican Club urge a speedy inquiry under the authority of the House of Representatives into the expenditure of the sums now appropriated in aid of disabled veterans, to the end that the country may be assured that the veterans are receiving the fullest possible benefit from the appropriations made in their behalf.

February 21, 1922.

Respectfully,

NICHOLAS MURRAY BUTLER,
Chairman

JULES BACHE
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CORNELIUS N. BLISS, JR.
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